

Testimony on HB 1015
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
Government Operations Division
John Harris, President & CEO
Prairie Public Broadcasting
March 12, 2025

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the budget request for Prairie Public Broadcasting, North Dakota's public media network.

I am John Harris, President and CEO of Prairie Public Broadcasting.

On behalf of Prairie Public Broadcasting, I request you support Governor Armstrong's budget of \$2,864,000 for Prairie Public in this year's biennial budget.

In 2024, Prairie Public celebrated 60 years of service to North Dakota. We began in 1964 with a single broadcast tower, and since then have grown to provide public media services that impact the citizens of our entire state—from childhood through all phases of life.

Education is the cornerstone of Prairie Public's mission. We provide researched, high-quality digital resources and learning materials to students, educators, parents, counselors, librarians, and tech coordinators, and we conduct professional training opportunities to help them use those tools in our region's classrooms.

Prairie Public provides public media services that educate, involve, and inspire the people of the prairie region. Public media strengthens communities and helps them to prosper. The citizens of North Dakota know the importance of a strong and viable public media entity for our community. We are committed to respect for our audience, civil discourse, and lifelong learning.

In addition, Prairie Public has embraced our public safety mission to maximize our spectrum for the public good. Public television stations are the backbone of the WARN system of presidential alerts in times of national emergency. Prairie Public is vital to our state as a locally owned and operated media organization that can serve in times of crisis.

Even as public distrust of national institutions and media is at an all-time high, studies show that public broadcasters retain the trust of the American people as an essential resource for well-informed citizens.

Prairie Public is a reliable source for international, regional, and local news from the worlds of politics, business, science, and the arts. In fact, our network of television, radio, and online services was one of the most comprehensive and trusted sources for statewide election coverage and debates during the 2024 election—vital for thoughtful citizens and healthy societies. Our coverage of the North Dakota legislature, including the long-running

program *North Dakota Legislative Review* and the new podcast *In Session*, helps you to serve your constituents and communicate the good work you accomplish.

In addition to broadcasting nationally produced television and radio programs such as *PBS News Hour*, *Nature*, *NOVA*, *Masterpiece*, *Morning Edition*, and *All Things Considered*, Prairie Public produces an extraordinary amount of quality programming that reflects North Dakota's history, culture, and issues of concern.

Our local productions cover topics ranging from community events to rural healthcare issues to legislative news. We partner with local agencies to help inform our citizens of critical issues that affect each and every one of us.

Prairie Public helps to preserve the history and culture of our region with locally produced documentaries. We celebrate local artists with our series *Prairie Musicians* and *Prairie Mosaic*. We interview newsmakers and difference makers weekdays on *Main Street* and weekly on *Prairie Pulse*.

The state of North Dakota has, for years, played a vital supporting role in the operation of our public media services. While the appropriation from the state of North Dakota does not cover all the expenses, many of the services would not be possible without state funding that provide the foundation for support from many other sources. It is important that North Dakota sustain its public media system.

The request for funding of \$2,864,000 for the 2025-2027 biennial session. These funds, along with other resources from local and federal sources, will be used to continue Prairie Public's services to the citizens of North Dakota.

Prairie Public requests the state fund the one time only support of \$1,700,000 to assist in the interconnection of ten radio and nine television transmitters. While these are not the total needs for Prairie Public, these transmitters and their interconnection are the backbone for delivering our services to North Dakota. Prairie Public secured last session \$2,100,000 from the State of Minnesota for upgrades to the eastern part of our coverage area.

Prairie Public and its members are deeply grateful to you for your past support. In all the years Prairie Public has been broadcasting, technology keeps changing, but our mission to provide services that educate, involve, and inspire has not.

In closing, let me remind you that Prairie Public belongs to the citizens of our region, and with your support Prairie Public will continue to be a community leader and assist the state in achieving its goals of economic strength, educational quality, and pride in our rich heritage.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for your time and consideration.



Annual Report

Prairie Public Broadcasting, Inc.
Fiscal Year 2024



1959

The North Central Educational Television Association was incorporated by Dr. Ted Donat.

1964

KFME signed on as the first educational television station in North Dakota.

1981

KCND-FM in Bismarck signed on, the first station on North Dakota Public Radio.

1994

Prairie Online implemented an online service that provided access to information and discussion for North Dakotans.

2004

Dakota Datebook, a daily look at North Dakota history, premiered on radio.

2006

Prairie Public Television and North Dakota Public Radio merged brands to become Prairie Public.

2016

Members get extended access to PBS shows on-demand through Passport and the PBS app.

2024

Prairie Public celebrates 60!

On January 19, 1964,

Prairie Public's first station—KFME in Fargo—signed on as North Dakota's educational television station.



A newspaper article from that year described our station as “provid[ing] televised material which can be used in classrooms ... but an equally large segment of its programming will be devoted to entertainment. Entertainment with a purpose, to be sure: it will encourage the viewer to use his mind as well as his eyes.”

In other words, we were set out to educate, involve, and inspire our viewers. Sound familiar? Our values then are still shining through in our mission today.

In the decades that have passed since that article was written, Prairie Public has grown to cover the entire state of North Dakota, northwest Minnesota, and Manitoba, introduced a statewide radio network, and become a PBS and NPR member station. We went from black-and-white to color, and have now entered the world of on-demand streaming with Passport, apps, and podcasts.

Through all the changes that Prairie Public has seen, there has been one constant—the unwavering support from people like you. Our members, listeners, and viewers have kept us going from day one.

Whether it's been through your membership or by simply enjoying our programs and advocating for our essential service, we thank you for keeping us going. Prairie Public wouldn't be here if not for your belief in our mission—those values we've held since our early days in 1964.

With gratitude,
John E. Harris III
President & CEO

Prairie Public Broadcasting provides quality radio, television, and public media services that **educate, involve, and inspire** the people of the prairie region.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Director of Radio

Ann Alquist

Director of Television

Barbara Gravel

Fiscal Year 2024

October 1, 2023–September 30, 2024

IN THE STUDIO



Prairie Musicians

Slamabama brought high energy country pop to the stage, Poitin explored Irish and Metis Red River traditional music, and so much more in this year's season of Prairie Musicians.



Prairie Mosaic

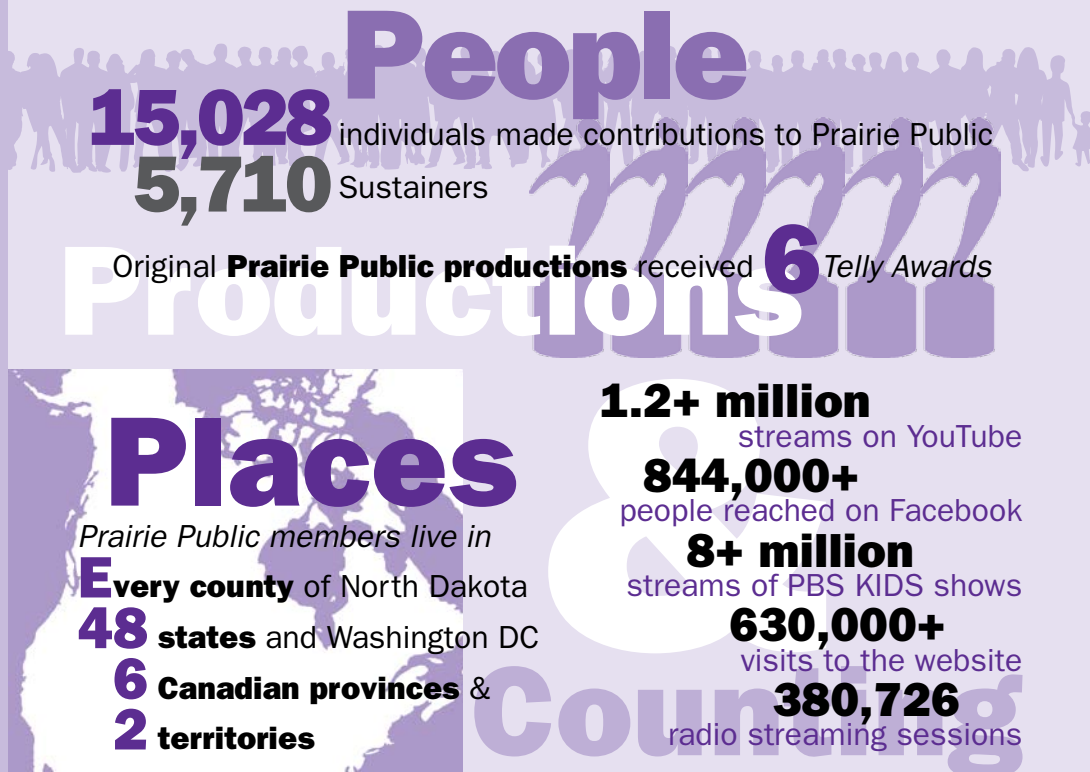
Prairie Mosaic captured stories that offer a window into the arts, culture, and history of the prairie region.



Prairie Pulse

Prairie Public's longstanding weekly affairs show, Prairie Pulse, tackled the social and political issues that matter most to viewers like you.

THE NUMBERS BEYOND THE AIRWAVES



IN THE NEWSROOM



Ann Alquist, Director of Radio

Prairie Public's longtime Director of Radio Bill Thomas retired, and in January we welcomed his successor, Ann Alquist. Ann brings more than 20 years of experience innovating public media at stations across the country. She is driven to provide trustworthy news and information, especially in rural communities.



Former Director of Radio Bill Thomas



D'Ya NoDak?

Prairie Public leaned into News Director Dave Thompson's extensive knowledge and deep political memory in a new e-newsletter, D'Ya NoDak. The newsletter

launched in April as a run-up to the June primaries and unpacks North Dakota elections and politics.

America Amplified

Prairie Public took part in America Amplified, a national public media initiative, to engage directly with communities and drive election coverage. Through this partnership,

Prairie Public hosted an online election information portal, where listeners submitted any question they had about voting or elections, and received accurate answers.



IN THE COMMUNITY



Be My Neighbor Day

Nearly 500 community members gathered to celebrate kindness and what it means to be a caring neighbor at Prairie Public's inaugural Be My Neighbor Day in Fargo. Children and families had the chance to meet Daniel Tiger from PBS KIDS' series "Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood," and community partners facilitated engaging, hands-on activities and crafts.

Prairie Public Learning Express

A new initiative designed to extend the reach of our services to expanded audiences launched this year. The Learning Express is a mobile trailer that travels to childcare centers, schools, and libraries across our region—free of charge! These services help us fulfill our mission to educate, involve, and inspire the people of the prairie region.



Prairie Public is
**listener and viewer-
supported public
media**, which means
this belongs to you.



Television

Prairie Public reaches households in North Dakota, northwestern Minnesota, and parts of South Dakota, Montana, and Manitoba with four program streams.

Viewers who use a rooftop antenna receive all four, and viewers who use cable, dish, or satellite services receive

Prairie Public's primary schedule and one or more additional streams. Prairie Public is available online and on the **PBS app, YouTube TV,** and **Hulu + Live TV.**

Radio

| | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Beach | 91.5 fm |
| Bismarck | 90.5 fm |
| Bowman | 91.9 fm |
| Devils Lake . . . | 91.7 fm |
| Dickinson | 89.9 fm |
| Fargo | 91.9 fm |
| Grand Forks . . | 89.3 fm |
| Grand Forks . . | 90.7 fm |
| Hettinger | 91.9 fm |
| Jamestown . . . | 91.5 fm |
| Minot | 88.9 fm |
| Williston | 88.7 fm |
| Williston | 89.5 fm |
| Plentywood MT | 91.9 fm |



Prairie Public brings us information from all over the country but it also brings us information from some of the far-flung corners of our state. And I think that's really valuable.—Nancy Guy, Bismarck, ND



While growing up, the world in pre-Internet rural North Dakota seemed limited. PBS opened the door to art, culture, music, movies, love and life in a way that radio and books couldn't.—Jeffrey Gion, Regent, ND



Charity Navigator, a nonprofit organization providing free access to data, tools, and resources to guide philanthropic decision-making, has given Prairie Public a four-star rating (with a score of 97%), meaning you can confidently support Prairie Public.

BEQUESTS

The following people honored Prairie Public with gifts in their estate. With deep regard, we remember these friends for their special commitment to sustaining Prairie Public for future generations.

Estate of Betty Mills
Estate of Joanne Ashley



Corporate office

Prairie Public

207 5th St N
Fargo, ND 58102

Contact

701-241-6900
info@prairiepublic.org
prairiepublic.org

Prairie Public Broadcasting, Inc

Tax ID: 45-0276899

Prairie Public Television (Manitoba), Inc

Charitable #: 119097913 RR0001

Our audited annual financial report for the year ending 9/30/2024 will be available in early spring 2025 at prairiepublic.org.



Annual Financial Report

for the Year Ending **9/30/24** • Prairie Public Broadcasting, Inc.

| Sources | Television | | Radio | | Total |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------|--------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| | Amount | % | Amount | % | |
| Membership | \$1,545,017 | 15% | \$525,091 | 16% | \$2,070,108 |
| Underwriting | \$152,884 | 2% | \$129,836 | 4% | \$282,720 |
| Corporation for Public Broadcasting | \$1,717,289 | 16% | \$233,068 | 7% | \$1,950,357 |
| Local Production Funding | \$119,485 | 1% | \$76,625 | 2% | \$196,110 |
| State of North Dakota ¹ | \$1,296,225 | 12% | \$200,000 | 6% | \$1,496,225 |
| State of Minnesota ¹ | \$869,779 | 8% | \$0 | 0% | \$869,779 |
| Grants | \$157,933 | 2% | \$0 | 0% | \$157,933 |
| Fees, Rents | \$743,915 | 7% | \$319,711 | 10% | \$1,063,626 |
| Charitable Gaming | \$1,198,945 | 12% | \$564,210 | 17% | \$1,763,155 |
| Planned Giving ² | \$1,578,998 | 15% | \$732,990 | 23% | \$2,311,988 |
| Other ³ | \$1,057,604 | 10% | \$485,587 | 15% | \$1,543,191 |
| TOTAL SOURCES | \$10,438,074 | 100% | \$3,267,118 | 100% | \$13,705,192 |
| Uses | | | | | |
| Programming & Production | \$2,749,019 | 29% | \$1,427,399 | 39% | \$4,176,418 |
| Engineering | \$1,283,225 | 13% | \$274,916 | 8% | \$1,558,141 |
| Administration ³ | \$1,596,043 | 17% | \$751,080 | 21% | \$2,347,123 |
| Fundraising | \$362,922 | 4% | \$86,967 | 2% | \$449,889 |
| System Upgrade & Other | \$1,695,336 | 18% | \$383,656 | 11% | \$2,078,992 |
| Change in Prairie Public Endowment | \$1,863,513 | 19% | \$706,999 | 19% | \$2,570,512 |
| TOTAL USES | \$9,550,058 | 100% | \$3,631,017 | 100% | \$13,181,075 |
| EXCESS (DEFICIT) SOURCES OVER USES | \$888,016 | | (\$363,899) | | \$524,117 |

Financial data provided from Eide Bailly LLP audited financial statements of Prairie Public Broadcasting, Inc.

1. Revenues include on-going and general revenue, and additional revenue from one-time funding available for capital projects; North Dakota, \$896,225 and Minnesota, \$147,260.

2. Planned giving includes contributions, realized gains, and unrealized gains to Endowment Funds.

3. Other sources include \$1,117,083 of revenue from insurance claims related to tower sites and the Fargo Building. Related expenses are recognized as incurred among the list of uses. Administration includes \$553,845 in repairs to the Fargo Building.

Local support composed of membership and underwriting is the largest source of unrestricted support for Prairie Public Broadcasting, Inc.

A newsletter for members of Prairie Public

cue

MARCH/APRIL 2025

TIME



WOLF
HALL

FOR



MARIE
ANTOINETTE

CALL THE
MIDWIFE



DRAMA

WATCH IN MARCH FOR THREE SEASON PREMIERES

READ MORE ABOUT EACH NEW SEASON INSIDE

In Session with the Legislature

Prairie Public is your source for **comprehensive legislative coverage** through television, radio, and digital platforms—including a new podcast.

In Session

The new podcast **In Session**, hosted by Prairie Public's Ann Alquist and Erik Deatherage, is a succinct and entertaining recap of activity during the North Dakota legislative session. New episodes are released on Mondays, and are available at prairiepublic.org/InSession, or your favorite podcast platform.

IN SESSION



Additionally, our statewide news team is providing ongoing news coverage on the radio and online at news.prairiepublic.org

Continuing Coverage

Prairie Public is continuing its long-running television series **North Dakota Legislative Review**, hosted by news director Dave Thompson. Each week, Thompson hosts conversations with newsmakers and legislators. The show airs on Prairie Public's television service on Fridays at 7:30pm during the North Dakota Legislative session, on the radio service on Fridays at 6:30pm, and is available to stream on YouTube.

Minnesota Legislature

Stay informed on legislative topics that affect all Minnesotans. Watch live coverage of the Minnesota Legislative session on the **MN Channel** every weekday from 8am-6pm.



THIS WINTER.

with support from the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, our Education Services team assembled and sent 60 free packages of classroom supplies specifically designed for students on the autism spectrum, or with neurodiverse needs, to 33 schools across North Dakota. The packages, "Carl's Classroom Crates," were themed with Carl the Collector, a new program that debuted in November and features the first PBS KIDS main character with autism.

Carl's Classroom Crates were designed with input from the North Dakota Autism Center and pediatric specialists

COMFORTING CLASSROOMS WITH CARL THE COLLECTOR



at Sanford Health to be effective for a variety of classroom or counseling environments. Each themed box included materials for 5-10 students and was aimed at addressing the unique needs of neurodiverse students in the classroom.

"These resources are going to be incredible for my students," said an early childhood special education teacher at John Hoeven Elementary in Minot.

"I look forward to having students use them throughout our day to help to maintain or regulate. This is truly a great outreach and amazing opportunity for our classrooms."

All 60 crates were claimed within 48 hours of offering this service to North Dakota schools. To learn more about the project, visit

prairiepublic.org/carlcrates



Corporate Office • 207 North 5th Street • Fargo ND 58102 • 800-359-6900 • info@prairiepublic.org • prairiepublic.org • Follow us @prairiepublic

Please remember Prairie Public Broadcasting in your will, trust, or general estate plans.





In March, watch for new seasons of popular series **Call the Midwife** and **Marie Antoinette**, and a sequel to the 2015 miniseries **Wolf Hall**.

Eagerly awaited sequel **Wolf Hall: The Mirror and the Light** continues the spellbinding story of royal power broker Thomas Cromwell during the cruel and capricious reign of Henry VIII.

The original 2015 *Wolf Hall* miniseries is based on Hilary Mantel's novel by the same name *and* its sequel, *Bring Up The Bodies*—and earned both a Peabody Award and Golden Globe award. **The Mirror and The Light** is the final installment of the series. **Tune in or stream new episodes on Sunday nights, beginning March 23, at 8pm.**

Season 2 of **Marie Antoinette** joins Marie and Louis at the height of their power. While facing an unprecedented financial crisis, the incessant attacks of Provence and Chartres against the royal couple stir up the hatred of the nobles, while disastrous consequences are looming with the infamous Affair of the Diamond Necklace incident. **Tune in or stream new episodes on Sunday nights, beginning March 23, at 9pm.**

The fan-favorite **Call the Midwife** is back with a new season! In Season 14, it is the beginning of a new decade in Poplar.

Set in 1970, chaos erupts as the Isle of Dogs bid for independence. Amid the turmoil, the midwives work tirelessly to keep Nonnatus House running while addressing complex social and health challenges. **Watch new episodes on Sundays, beginning March 30, or stream* with Passport.** (*U.S. only)

A Tax-Smart Way to Give

As tax season approaches, many people are looking for ways to maximize their giving while minimizing their tax burden. One often-overlooked option for those 70½ or older is the Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD). A QCD allows individuals to donate directly from their Individual Retirement Account (IRA) to a qualified charity, including Prairie Public, offering significant tax advantages.

For North Dakota donors, making a QCD of \$5,000 or more (up to \$20,000 per couple) to Prairie Public's Endowment Fund may also qualify for a 40% state tax credit.

Consider speaking with your financial advisor or tax professional to explore how a QCD could fit into your giving plan this year.

Questions? **Troy Davis • Director of Development**
800-359-6900 ext. 510
tdavis@prairiepublic.org • prairiepublic.org/ira



FREE FOR ALL: The Public Library

New from **Independent Lens**, **Free for All: The Public Library** tells the story of the quiet revolutionaries who made a simple idea happen. From the pioneering women behind the "Free Library Movement" to today's librarians who serve the public, meet those who created a civic institution where everything is free and the doors are open to all.

Free For All: The Public Library premieres on Tuesday, April 29, at 9pm.

Mark your calendar: Join us on Wednesday, April 23, at the **Fargo Theatre** for a free screening and panel discussion! Follow us on Facebook and Instagram to stay updated with more information.



A newsletter for members of Prairie Public
MARCH/APRIL 2025



Tractor Wars tells the compelling story of the fight between Deere, Ford, and International to build the first all-purpose tractor.

Watch during our March Membership Drive on Sunday, March 9, at 6pm.

CELEBRATE 50 YEARS OF MUSIC AUSTIN CITY LIMITS®

The trailblazing live music series **Austin City Limits** is celebrating its 50th season with an extra-special program that will bring musical stars

from the show's five-decade history back to the ACL stage. The celebration will feature one-of-a-kind music performances with a stellar

line-up featuring Leon Bridges, Gary Clark Jr. joined by Eve Monsees, Billy Strings featuring Sierra Hull and Zach Top, Indigo Girls,

Lyle Lovett, Shawn Colvin, Brandy Clark, Rufus Wainwright, and more. Watch **Austin City Limits: Celebrating 50** on Friday, April 4, at 8pm.